

CETACEAN NOTES. I. SEI AND RORQUAL WHALES
ON THE MISSISSIPPI COAST, A CORRECTION.
II. A DWARF SPERM WHALE IN MISSISSIPPI
SOUND AND ITS HELMINTH PARASITES

by

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I. Gunter and Christmas (1973) described the events leading to the stranding of a baleen whale on Ship Island, Mississippi, in 1968, giving the species as *Balaenoptera physalus*, the Rorqual. Unfortunately the identification was in error, but fortunately good photographs were shown. The underside of the tail was a splotched white, but there was no black margin. The specimen also had fewer throat and belly grooves than the Rorqual, as a comparison with True's (1904) photograph shows. Dr. James Mead (*in litt.*) pointed out that the animal was a Sei Whale, *Balaenoptera borealis*. This remains a new Mississippi record and according to Lowery's (1974) count, it is the fifth specimen reported from the Gulf of Mexico. The stranding of a sixth Sei Whale on Anclote Keys in the Gulf, west of Tarpon Springs, Florida on 30 May 1974, was reported in the newspapers and by the Smithsonian Institution (1974).

II. Gunter, Hubbs and Beal (1955) gave measurements on a Pygmy Sperm Whale, *Kogia breviceps*, which stranded on Mustang Island on the Texas coast and commented upon the recorded variations of proportional measurements in this species. Then according to Raun, Hoese and Moseley (1970) these questions were resolved by Handley (1966), who showed that a second species, *Kogia simus*, the Dwarf Sperm Whale, is also present in the western North Atlantic. Handley's argument is based on skull comparisons and it seems to be rather indubitable. According to Raun et al. (*op. cit.*), the stranding of a species of *Kogia* on Galveston Island recorded by Caldwell, Ingles and Siebenaler (1960) was *K. simus*. They also say that Caldwell (*in litt.*) had previously come to the same conclusion. Caldwell et al. also recorded another specimen from Destin, Florida, which is now considered to have been a specimen of *simus*. The known status of these two little sperm whales in the Gulf is summarized by Lowery (*op. cit.*).

Here we wish to record a third specimen of *Kogia simus* in the Gulf of Mexico and the first from the Mississippi coast. The events were set forth in three newspaper articles by Richard Glazier in the Gulfport-Biloxi newspaper, **The Daily Herald**, for October 3, 4 and 5, 1973. According to these accounts, a young whale was found on the beach at Biloxi on October 2, 1973 by Seale Gruich. It was removed to the Marine Life Aquarium at Gulfport, and Gerald E. Dukes, D.V.M., concocted a formula for feeding with the advice of Dr. William Walker of the Marine World in Los Angeles. The animal weighed seventy-three pounds (33.1 kg) and it was fifty-two inches (122 cm) long when received by the Gulfport aquarium.

Although the whale ate well and apparently tried to play with its keepers, it experienced convulsions at about 11:00 p.m. and died soon thereafter on October 5, 1973, thus bearing out the unhelpful prediction of Mr. Don Jacobs, owner of Marine Life.

The whale was autopsied by Doctor Dukes, of the Handsboro Animal Hospital, and the junior author, zoologist with the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory. Although this little female whale, estimated to be about 4 months old, had been bruised and showed signs of teeth marks, no wounds that would have caused death were seen and no gross pathology was discovered that would have caused death. Copies of the post-mortem report dated October 5 were distributed to various people. A seven page undated, typed report was issued by the Marine Life Aquarium after October 5. It recorded the events leading up to the death including all observations and the food formula.

Necropsy of the trunk of the whale provided three parasites. The forestomach and pyloric stomach contained nematodes in larger numbers than the fundic stomach. Both *Stomachus typicus* and *Terranova* sp. were present; a single small specimen of the latter was also embedded in the liver. Two specimens of the tetraphyllidean cestode "*Phyllobothrium delphini* larval type 4," as summarized by Delyamure (1955), occurred in the blubber adjacent to the anal orifice. *Stomachus typicus*, as well as *S. catodontis*, was reported from one of three specimens of *Kogia simus* off the northeastern coast of Florida (Zam, Caldwell and Caldwell 1971). Davcy (1971) considered both *S. catodontis* and *S. kogiae* as synonyms of *Anisakis simplex*, a species which has been reported from the related *K. breviceps*. *Phyllobothrium delphini* and *Phyllobothrium* sp. were reported from *K. simus* by Zam et al. (1971) and Dailey and Brownell (1972), respectively. *Terranova* sp. could not be identified specifically, but is a new host record. Dollfus (1966) briefly described an unidentified species of *Terranova* from a stranded *K. breviceps* in France which appears to differ slightly from our specimens, but could be the same species. Van Thiel (1966) listed *Phocanema* sp. from the same host and locality. Whether that genus is a synonym of *Terranova* is questionable, which suggests the species is the same as that reported by Dollfus.

The presence of these parasites, which all use intermediate hosts, in the whale suggests that she had been obtaining some food from sources other than her mother. The specimen of *Terranova* sp. in the liver, however, suggests that that species might also be obtained from the mother through the placenta or from nursing.

After death the iced head was shipped to Dr. James Mead at the U.S. National Museum of Natural History, and the body was brought to the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory where it was autopsied and subsequently sent to the National Museum. Doctor Mead confirmed his tentative identification of the species as *Kogia simus*. This is the third known specimen of this species reported from the Gulf of Mexico.

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